

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 173

By Johnson

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Mary Thomas Burton Dennis on the celebration of her 100th birthday.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pay tribute to those citizens who are celebrating special occasions in their estimable lives; and

WHEREAS, Mary Thomas Burton Dennis will celebrate her 100th birthday on April 7, 2007, a milestone that will be commemorated as yet another precious souvenir of life's rich pageant; and

WHEREAS, the daughter of James William and Fannie Bondurant Burton, Mary Thomas Burton Dennis was born on April 7, 1907, in Sharon, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, educated in the Sharon public schools, Mary Dennis received an associate's degree from Freed-Hardeman University and a bachelor's degree from George Peabody College for Teachers; and

WHEREAS, she taught math for ten years in Missouri and directed the folk drama writing contests at Southeast Missouri State University; she later worked as a substitute teacher for Sharon public schools; and

WHEREAS, in 1924, as a high school senior English assignment, Mrs. Dennis started writing about Sharon for the *Weakley County Press*; she or her mother continued to do so until 1968; and

WHEREAS, in 1935, Mary Dennis, accompanied by four other young ladies, traveled by ship to Europe for two months; she saw Adolph Hitler, heard him speak, and witnessed Italian forces sailing for war with Ethiopia; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, she aided her Sharon community by enrolling its citizens for rationing, knitting, and volunteering with the American Red Cross; and

WHEREAS, her passion for travel took her back to Europe three times, to the Middle East, the Caribbean, Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, the Canadian Rockies, China twice, the Far East, the Scandinavian Countries, and Russia, and throughout much of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Mary Dennis served with acumen and alacrity as a member of the first Weakley County Library Board, an officer of Woodlawn Cemetery Association, chairman of the Endowment Fund, and Girl Scout Troop Leader; and

WHEREAS, she lived in the Burton home in Sharon from 1939 to 1968, and helped care for her parents, grandmother, and aunts; she also managed the family farms, real estate, and investments; and

WHEREAS, on October 17, 1968, Mary Thomas Burton was joined in marriage with Roy Jones Dennis of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, Roy Dennis, who founded and co-owned Central Parking System of Nashville and the former Sunshine, now United Parking of Atlanta, passed away on August 7, 1982; and

WHEREAS, Mary Dennis is an active and devout member of her Church of Christ, was baptized by L.L. Brigance in the Obion River, and taught Bible classes and World Bible School Correspondence lessons; and

WHEREAS, she is an avid genealogical researcher, having collected and documented many records of interest; in 1983, she was assisted by Col. and Mrs. David Holland of Nashville in restoring the Benjamin Bondurant Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, she wrote the Edward Albert Tansil, Jr., section of the Tansil Book published in 1983, published a record of her grandfather Burton's family in 1965, and organized and served as first president of the Jean Pierre Bondurant Chapter of the Huguenot Society of the Founders of Manakin in the Colony of Virginia; she has served as president and treasurer of the Tennessee branch and as second vice president of the national branch; and

WHEREAS, in addition to being a member and past registrar of the Campbell chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Mary Dennis belongs to the Thomas Lygon chapter of the Colonial Dames of the 17th Century in which she has served as second vice president and chaplain, and the Magna Charta Dames; she was a Docent at the Governor's Residence; and

WHEREAS, Mary Dennis has also lent her time and talents to the American Association of University Women, for which she served as an officer, New Neighbors of Nashville, the Gourmet Club, and the Canasta Club of Retired North Carolina and St. Louis Railroad employees; she is listed in *Personalities of the South 1970* and *Community Leaders of America 1981*, and she has endowed scholarships to her alma mater, Freed-Hardeman University; and

WHEREAS, as Mary Dennis approaches her 11th decade, she is still an active and productive member of society, in spite of her blindness, and she participates in various civic and community events; and

WHEREAS, we wish to grasp this golden opportunity to specially recognize one of Tennessee's most outstanding citizens on this very special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate Mary Thomas Burton Dennis on the celebration of her 100th birthday and extend to her our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.